

Christian Missions
from a
Statesman's Viewpoint

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Christian Missions From A Statesman's Viewpoint

By

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UNITED STATES MINISTER TO CHINA, 1898-1905

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CHRISTIAN MISSIONS FROM A STATESMAN'S VIEWPOINT

REVOLUTIONS never go backward, and although the Boxer rebellion of 1900 had a more depressing and disastrous effect upon missionary interest in the United States than it did upon missionary aggressiveness in China, nevertheless the misrepresentations of the ignorant and heartless critics of those days have since been challenged, a better and clearer understanding has been established, and a new zeal has been born. Out of the holocaust of 1900 new life has arisen, and to-day the work seems in a better condition than ever before, and the promise for the future is more encouraging.

New Zeal
and
New Life

When the first missionaries were sent out from the United States to foreign lands, had I been on the ground I should probably have advised against the taking of such a step. But time, history, and the progress of the good work have demonstrated that the promoters of the enterprise were right, and I am glad to acknowledge my change of heart, and my cordial and unreserved endorsement of such efforts.

The
Promoters
Were Right

It is no longer to be questioned that mission work was needed wherever on the globe the gospel was unknown. That the results of this work have everywhere been successful and encouraging is a statement approved and attested by everyone who has thoroughly and without prejudice investigated the work of any mission field in any part of the world.

Results
Everywhere
Encouraging

It has been my pleasant privilege, as well as my official duty, to observe and to familiarize myself with the work of missionaries in various parts of the world, but more especially, more intimately, and more exhaustively, in the unlimited and as yet scarcely touched field of the great Orient.

Hawaii
and the
Philippines

Missionary effort in Hawaii has lifted a savage archipelago out of the sea, regenerated it, and fitted it for annexation to the United States. In the Philippines also it is doing its full share toward the evangelization of the interesting people on those beautiful islands.

The
Christian
Spirit in
Japan

In Japan the work has been crowned by a success which is marvelous beyond compare, but which cannot be estimated by figures, or shown by statistics. It is not to be measured by the number of converts secured, by the number of churches built, hospitals erected, or schools founded, but by the beneficent influence felt throughout the Empire, and by the Christian spirit which pervades not only the lives and homes of the common people, but which has taken a firm hold of the higher classes and of officialdom; has entered the homes of the Government's leading representatives; has been taken into Parliament, until even the Imperial Palace has felt and acknowledged its power for good.

The
Struggle in
Manchuria

To fully appreciate the influence of Christianity upon the Japanese, and its climax of effectiveness, we must follow the fortunes of this wonderful people across the straits and into Manchuria. When the memorable

struggle was at its height; when the success of Admiral Togo's bombardment of Port Arthur was by no means assured; when battalion after battalion of General Nogi's incomparable soldiers were being hurled against embattled walls and mowed down to make room for like onslaughts by other heroic battalions, and when other matchless columns were actually marching toward Mukden over a bridge formed of their dead brothers; when all of our efforts on behalf of foreign news correspondents, military observers, and merchants, were met with a firm but polite refusal, and it was utterly impossible to secure permission for another one of these to enter the Japanese lines: it was then, that a request was made by the Young Men's Christian Association to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to their incomparable fighting and dying men.

The Association's
Request

The great Marshal Oyama, who had seen and felt the influence of Christian missionary work in the homeland, said, in effect, "Yes, come and go among my brave men wherever you please. Do them all the good you can, and may the God of battles abundantly bless you and them." So the doors were thrown open, and the spirit of Christianity, which the missionaries of long ago had taken to Japan, was welcomed among her soldiers, fighting in a foreign land. This ought to give all missionary organizations, and missionary workers everywhere, infinite hope and limitless en-

Marshal
Oyama
Consents

couragement to press forward in their righteous endeavors, for—

* * * right is right, since God is God;
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin!

Success
in
India and
China

Chinese
Civil
Service

A half century of God-directed effort in India, has brought you to a glorious jubilee of splendid achievements. In China also a much-needed and successful work has been accomplished. But there it is seriously handicapped; there it has been practically impossible for missionaries to make any headway among the official or higher classes. Throughout the Empire it is, and always has been, the height of every Chinaman's ambition to obtain and hold office. He dreams of it, he studies for it, he struggles for it, and he lives for it. The Chinese have had a regular civil service through which alone one can enter or secure advancement in office. This includes a serious study of the classics, an avowed belief in and practice of Confucian ethics, and a continuous and substantial worship of the great Sage himself. This policy being in direct conflict with the principles of Christianity as understood by the missionaries, it is impossible for an ambitious Chinaman to accept the Christian religion, or even seriously to investigate it. And so the essential religious work has necessarily been restricted to the lower and more ignorant classes, with few conversions among the

bearers of all that is best in western civilization. It is they, who, armed with only the Bible and school books, and sustained by a faith which gives them unflinching courage, have penetrated the darkest interior of that great Empire, hitherto unvisited by foreigners, and blazed the way for the oncoming commerce, which everywhere has quickly followed them. It was they who first planted the banner of the Prince of Peace in every place where now floats the flag of commerce and trade. The dim pathways which they traced—often marking them with their life's blood—are being rapidly transformed into great highways of travel and trade, and are fast becoming lined with chapels, school houses, and railway stations, where heretofore were found only idolatrous shrines and lodging places for wheelbarrow men and pack mules.

The Bible
and
School
Books

Travel and
Trade

In my judgment, the most effective aids toward spreading the gospel, and the most certain channels through which to prepare the Chinese heart and mind for its favorable reception, are the school and hospital. Their value and importance are immeasurable. These institutions are being most intelligently and successfully used by your representatives in China, are giving a great impetus to religious work, and bringing to the Chinese incalculable good. It is with me a matter of pardonable pride that ninety-five per cent of the Protestant schools in the great Empire, have been established, and are being conducted by Americans. And it should be a matter of special pride with you

School
and
Hospital

Peking
University

that the great Methodist University at Peking, in which Dr. Gamewell was long an honored teacher, and over which Dr. H. H. Lowry so efficiently presides, compares most favorably with any school of like grade in this country. And it is well worth the while of Dr. George B. Smyth to have gone all the way from Ireland, and to have spent a lifetime in China, in order to found such a splendid school as to-day stands in Foochow as an everlasting monument to his memory.

Western
Teaching

I understand that in the old days your work in the missionary fields was confined more strictly to religious teaching, without first attempting any general educational preparation. But experience has proved that the heathen mind is more receptive of God's truth after it has been opened, and in a measure developed, by the ordinary methods of western teaching. This is natural. The pioneers of the great prairie states, who by their intelligence and energy have made the desert to blossom as the rose, who have carved out of the virgin prairies an Empire unsurpassed on the globe, did not at first scatter their valuable seeds upon the wild and inhospitable sod, but prepared it with plow and harrow for the action of air, sunshine, and rain, making it certain that when the good seed was sown, it would germinate, grow, and produce an hundred fold. So it is that proper and sufficient preparation, by timely educational work, will in the end, insure in non-Christian lands the largest and most abundant harvest.

Prepara-
tion by
Education

One of the most hopeful and potent movements in the Chinese work, especially in North China, is that toward union of the educational, medical, and theological work of the various denominations. This is as it should be. It greatly enhances the value of your teaching in the estimation of all Chinese; and the policy should be encouraged and extended until it includes all foreign educational and Christian effort in the whole Empire.

Union
Movements

During no period in the history of missionary work in China has such substantial progress been made as during the last five years, and at no time since its beginning, has it been in such a prosperous and hopeful condition as to-day. In fact, notwithstanding the sensational rumors of trouble so persistently published in the public press both of Europe and America, I firmly believe that the present outlook for China is brighter than it has ever been before. And it is due more than anything else to the educational efforts and examples of missionary teachers.

Progress of
Last Five
Years

Just after the settlement of the Boxer troubles, the Chinese government decided to reform its entire educational system, and two years ago it approved and published most excellent new school regulations. Last summer the government formally abolished the old, time-honored examination system, and has since established a national board of education to rank with the other great Imperial boards.

Educa-
tional
Reform

In all the provinces, primary, intermediate, and

School,
College
and
University

high schools have been provided for, their curricula containing the more important European languages. Industrial, commercial, mechanical, and engineering schools are also to be established. After leaving the provincial schools, the boys pass by modern examinations into the college, and thence to the University at Peking. This University is to consist of a College of Literature, of Law, of Engineering, of Science, and of Agriculture. The site has already been selected, and some of the buildings are now being constructed. The old examination hall with its sixteen thousand stalls, which was one of the principal sights for tourists in Peking, has been destroyed, and one of the new buildings is being erected on its ruins. This is, indeed, a crowding out of the old and an ushering in of the new.

The
Imperial
Commis-
sion

One of the principal duties of the Imperial Commission, which recently made an extensive visit to the United States, was carefully and critically to study our educational methods, and to take back the data and information necessary to enable the Chinese government to develop and carry out its new educational system along approved Western lines. Let us hope that they may go back fully freighted with our very best. And may the Methodist Episcopal Church send into this field the increased number of teachers and preachers necessary to meet the demands of the great opportunity which this new epoch in Chinese history is presenting to the enlightened Christian people of the world.

The most striking, the most interesting, and the most hopeful step in the advancement of the Empire, has been taken by and for the Chinese women and girls. Some of you probably know that only a few years ago the wife of our Minister in Peking knocked at the door of the Imperial Palace which leads to the female apartments thereof, and with the assistance of American lady missionaries, succeeded not only in entering its heretofore sealed portals, but also in securing a welcome entrance into the heart and confidence of the great Empress Dowager herself. Out of this confidence most intimate relations sprang up between the leading ladies of the Imperial Court and of the American legation, which have resulted in the opening of the princely palaces of Peking to Western thought and Western ideas, to such an extent that now many prosperous schools for girls have been established; and a woman's daily newspaper, the only one in all the world, is published, and is daily read by and to thousands of the best women in the Empire.

Outlook
for
Chinese
Women

A Daily
Paper for
Women

It is the missionaries who have been the potent intermediaries in this splendid accomplishment. The movement, having been encouraged and assisted by them, is stamped with their Christian influence, and out of it all is bound to come permanent benefit to the noble cause in which you and they are so unselfishly engaged.

Mission-
aries the
Potent In-
termedia-
ries

I wish to correct an erroneous impression which seems generally to obtain in this country, as well as in Europe, namely, that woman is a nonentity in China.

Woman
not a Non-
entity in
China

To say nothing of the Empress Dowager, there is not a country on the face of the earth where woman has more influence in the home, or in general is more dominant over the other sex than she is in this great Oriental Empire. Hence, the significance of this movement, and the prospect of limitless good to come from this awakening among the women whose homes heretofore have been barred and sealed against all the world outside.

Mission-
aries
Helpful
and
Needful

I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, yet I can see in the present situation in China the preparation for a successful forward movement which will astonish and gratify the world. In this movement, the work, influence, and assistance of American missionaries will be greatly needed, and should be felt as never before. The Chinese will need them, and the vast crowds of Americans and other foreigners attracted thither by the new trade possibilities will also need them, and by all means ought to have the courageous help and uplifting support of the spiritual advice and Christian example of these missionaries.

When
Diverse
Civiliza-
tions
Mingle

Those who have visited the great foreign commercial settlements of the far East, know that life is freer and easier there than in the West, and that, with that freedom and ease, comes a strong temptation to self-indulgence which everyone cannot withstand. When two diverse civilizations mingle as they do there, the moral standing of neither prevails. Where home ties are loosened, and ten thousand miles separate one from the censorship of loving friends, there is apt to

be a relaxation of self-discipline, and a tendency to deterioration. Kipling very aptly pictures the situation in those verses which represent the "British Tommy" as saying:

"Ship me somewheres East of Suez, where the best is like
the worst;
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments, an' a man can
raise a thirst."

With prudence and tact very much can be done to ameliorate this situation, and it is gratifying to know that the missionaries are not shirking and will not shirk their plain duty in helping their own people as well as the Chinese. But they need at all times the cordial approval and hearty encouragement of American Christians, in this as well as in every other step of their arduous labors.

Mission-
aries no
Shirks

According to my judgment there never has been in the history of foreign missionary work, a more opportune time for earnest effort than the present, nor a moment which gave such promise of an early day of glorious fruition; and it is the high duty of every believer of Christ's teaching, and of every lover of his fellowmen, to help it along.

The Time
Opportune

Aid the dawning, tongue and pen,
Aid it, hopes of honest men,
Aid it paper, aid it type,
Aid it, for the hour is ripe.

